



The Circle

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 3

SUMMER 1990

Editor's Note

Finally, the goal of The Circle has been realized. With the publication of our third issue we have completed the long, arduous process of the magazine's rebirth. The Circle returned from its enforced hybernation in 1986 and since then it has been the goal of recent editors to regain the confidence of Auburn students and faculty. With this year's issues we feel that we have accomplished this goal. Printing material that is relevant to Auburn students is our purpose, and in this issue we've focused mainly on creative writing. However, we have maintained space for articles (as usual) and introduced a new element—the Letters to the Editor section. This was an idea originally formulated in the fall, but since I have only just received my first letter, it's been late getting started. Perhaps future editors will continue this section, after all it is a form of expression and students have

a right to be creative.

I would like to thank the staff and Dr. Jemian for the time and effort they spent working in the office and the Communications Board for having patience and working with us to focus the future direction of the magazine. "Thank you" also to the Editorial Board for judging our contest and helping us decide on appropriate material for the magazine. But most of all, "thank you" to the students who took the time to submit. It takes a great deal of intestinal fortitude to subject your work to the pressure of public scrutiny.

I hope you enjoy this issue, it contains the winners and honorable mentions of the Sigma Tau Delta Creative Writing Contest for 1990 and the winner and honorable mention of The Circle's contest. So read, enjoy, and take a few home with you this summer to share with friends.

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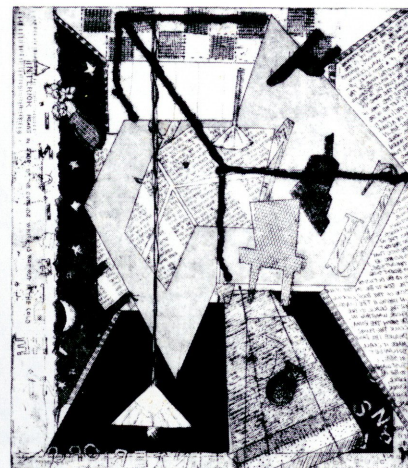
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First Place winner for fiction in the
Sigma Tau Delta Creative Writing Contest.

Permanence

Congratulations to Lein Shory, author
of "Permanence," for receiving First Place
in the category of fiction in the Sigma Tau
Delta Creative Writing Contest. Due to the
explicit language contained in the story, it
is unsuitable for publication, based on
Auburn University guidelines for *The
Circle*.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ms. Haack—

I would simply like to register a complaint about your "Editor's Notes" of the past two Circles. Twice you have mentioned that your point is to "steer clear of homosexual topics." Even as a heterosexual I find this or any form of discrimination repulsive in the fact that you so lightly pass that off. As an editor it is your choice to print what you see fit for the Auburn community, but to single out any group in your bias is discrimination. I'm sure there would be much more complaints if you had "steered clear of black topics" "handicapped," "oriental," or any other small interest group.

Thank you,
Ken Sonderson

Everything else looked great!

Mr. Sonderson—

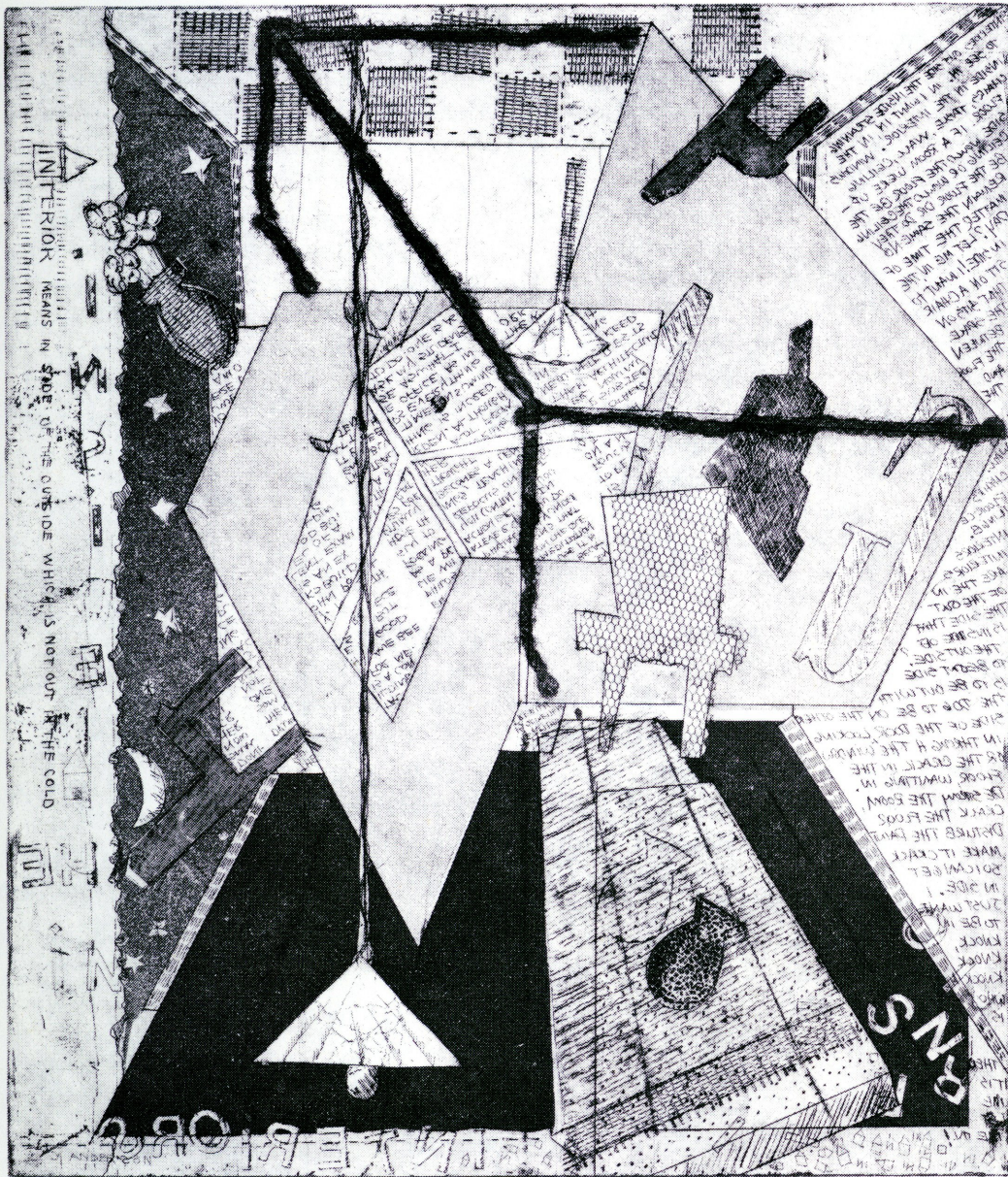
In reference to the above letter I would like to say first of all that I'm glad someone actually reads the Editor's note. This is probably the most insignificant area of the magazine. Had I chosen to write a whole article slamming the homosexual community, I would expect an uproar. This was merely a passing comment. Duly noted, it may be taken as being discriminatory, but it was not intended to be so. The issues of being homosexual at Auburn and AIDS can only be covered so many times without the general populace growing weary of the subject. Not only that, but it is often considered as a "filler" for the magazine. In my opinion, if an article is to be written,

it should treat the subject and not the object. That is, it should be written with care and concern, not in a sensationalistic manner.

Thank you for your time and concern, and I apologize to anyone this may have offended.

The Editor-

Our apologies to David Wimberley, whose story "Soldier of Fortune" appeared in our last issue. Three errors were made regarding his story, all made in typing. The first error concerns Author's "photogenic head." The sentence should read: "...Author calculated his scores in his photographic head..." (page 4, column 3, paragraph 1). The next two errors concern Author firing on Dr. Kertz (page 6, column 2, paragraph 4). First of all, the second sentence should read: "His index finger..." (instead of "He index finger..."). The last error is in the final sentence of the paragraph. It should read: "He uttered the first report of his pistol with rising inflection, as if to ask an important question; the second report he uttered with falling inflection, as if to answer the question with finality."



C.J. Anderson

REAGANOMICS AT ITS BEST

What's the difference between Ronald Reagan and a prostitute? A prostitute costs \$50 and Reagan costs \$30,000. Of course, Reagan talks for his money and a prostitute does something that is, shall we say more physically exerting. The one major characteristic they have in common is that both have the same amount of love and compassion for their employers—none.

Since Reagan left the White House and gave up his role as president of eight years he has turned to giving speeches for outrageous sums of money. It would seem someone by now would have questioned why people are willing to pay such exorbitant prices. After all, in two terms as president he rarely gave a coherent speech, and it was a bonus if he remained awake throughout the event.

Meanwhile, Reagan's wife, Nancy, is earning money of her own. She recently published a book on whines. The Donald Reagan whine should be ingested with chicken, the IRS whine with fish, and so on.

These are two pretty amazing people. In their lifetimes the Reagans have amassed more money than most people could ever dream of. They are fairly old and probably will be dying soon, unless they bought off God Himself, yet they continue to hoard more and more cash. Never do either consider giving something back to the country that supported them. sure, Nancy's willing to go on television and tell kids to "just say no to drugs," but what does that mean? It makes so much sense to street children who have nothing to be told by an elderly white rich woman to just say no. She and Ronnie will probably send all of them Swanson's entrees for dinner that night so they'll be fed.

This entire situation becomes even more depressing when Jimmy Carter's name is mentioned. In case no one recalls, Carter was president before Reagan. The two men cannot be compared, only contrasted.

Carter was considered a bad president and Reagan a good one. The Reagans and the media mocked Carter. But what about the men themselves? Carter is a good person. He has done his best to help people not only in this nation, but all over the world. Reagan doesn't believe in helping individuals—other than himself. He helps businesses, corporations, and the likes of Donald Trump, who is really a corporation in himself.

Where has this line of logic gotten the United States? Big business is running the government and the phrase "exploitation of the workers" actually means something instead of just being a useless piece of Marxist rhetoric. The nation's become so materialistic that parents are now naming their children so the initials will spell "B.M.W."

So much has been lost by the Reagan train of thought. There are 25 million homeless in America. I couldn't count that high even if I took off my shoes and dropped my pants for assistance. Abortion is a right that sill soon be forfeited as well, now that Ronnie's illegitimate son George is at the helm of the nation. The Environmental Protection Agency is now only a hollow name. Today when toxins foul our air and Exxon destroys our sea and land, a commission is sent not to study the problem; but rather to see if there really is a problem. After all, bald eagles are known for playing possum.

Some people may now recall that the bald eagle is our country's symbol. Bush remembered this too and that is why he saw to it that such a heavy fine was levied against Exxon for the Alaskan oil spill. For soiling a state and killing a national symbol several times over, Exxon was forced to pay \$10,000 in fines. There must have been one helluva tense board meeting in Texas that week. How could they come up with so much money? A raffle, perhaps? Fortunately, the United States Court System has seen the idiocy of this and is taking appropriate measures.

Reagan and Bush have done an incredible job of turning around the economy, but at what price? In Dickens' time the streets were sewers. Today our sewers are in the air we breathe. It's unhealthy to go outside in some cities because of the pollution level. At this point it must be asked if, as a people, we want to continue down this path. If not, could someone please resurrect Teddy Roosevelt, or the Democratic Party? It would probably be easier to try for Teddy.

Christopher Shaffer

It's not too unlike those summer mornings
At the camp when we would shuffle
Through the dew-covered grass,
Outside the lunchroom waiting
For the morning prayer to be said so the doors would open
And our breakfast would be served.

So we would pile onto the benches
With clumbering grace to stack the pancakes
With syrup and sausage on our meager plates.

And now I look back and wonder if,
On those cool mornings when we stood
Wet-sneakered under the apple tree,
We knew that we would be led
To our food by adults once again.
Except this time we would be well-behaved.

So we fall on the benches
With arthritic grace to stack the pancakes
With syrup and sausage on our meager plates.

Except this time, we would be well-behaved.

K. Nicole Smith



Memories

Rain beat down on the roof of the small one story house. The water ran down filling the small cracks in the roof and dripped down into the house. James Whitcome shuffled about the house placing and replacing pans underneath the leaks.

"Damn roof," he muttered as rain spattered on his head from a newborn leak.

His tired legs slowly made their way to the kitchen sink where he emptied his pans.

"Damn roof," he muttered again as he emptied another pot. "Should have fixed it years ago."

A wet pan slipped from his hands and clattered against the floor. Bones cracked and creaked as he stooped to pick it up.

"I'm getting too old for this."

Exhausted, James ran his bony fingers through the remnants of his hair. His face was haggard with permanent stubble. His skin seemed dried to his bones with the deep brown color worn in through the years. His mouth had a fixed grimace, more from necessity than choice. The neighborhood children told stories about him and occasionally tested their courage at his front door. He was too old for this, much too old.

The patter of rain on the window above the sink caught his attention. He stared out at the low dark clouds and the brief flashes of lightning breaking the gloom. It looked as if it would never end.

In 1927 everything looked good and to James Whitcomb, nothing looked better

than Emma Johnson. They had been married one fine spring day much to the delight of both their families. Everyone knew they would eventually marry, all you had to do was see the way they looked at each other and it was obvious they were meant to be together forever.

With their honeymoon just finished, the newlyweds were eager to find a home to settle down in to start their life together.

"The kitchen is very spacious," the realtor told them. "Plenty of room to move around in."

"Yes, there is," agreed Emma politely.

"Well, that's the whole house, what do you think?"

"Will you excuse us for a few minutes Mr. O'Rieley, we'd like to talk it over."

Mr. O'Rieley promptly scuttled out of sight.

"Well what do you think? Do you like it?"

"It's awfully big just for the two of us James; maybe we should look at something else."

"I didn't ask you if it was too big, I asked if you liked it."

"Well yes, but..."

"Then it's settled, we'll buy it."

"But it's too expensive, we won't be able to afford it," Emma warned, but it was only a half-hearted attempt.

"Hold on a second." James took his wife's hand. "I can tell by your voice you want this house as much as I do. It's just right for both of us." He looked into Emma's eyes and could see her answer. "That's what I thought."

Mr. O'Rieley shuffled back in. James looked at his wife and saw the excited smile on her face. He squeezed her hand, "We'll take it."

A clap of thunder shook James back to the present. He looked up at the kitchen clock, twenty minutes had passed.

"I'm going crazy too," he thought as he hurried about the house to empty the overflowing pans. Soon he had them back under control, but he was exhausted. Slowly, he made his way to a chair in the den and rested his weary bones.

The train station was full of uniforms and James was no exception. He had volunteered right after Pearl Harbor without telling Emma first. She was furious but was wise enough not to argue. There was no way to stop him and he would have more important things to worry about than her. She just wanted him to come back.

The final boarding call came all too soon and the new soldiers filed aboard. Not a word came from either one, there was nothing more to say.

James kissed his wife goodbye then boarded the train. Emma stood by the tracks watching the black smoke curl into the air until the train disappeared from view. As the women and children left the station with tears on their cheeks, Emma said a silent prayer for her husband before turning to join them.

James woke with a start. The rain had stopped, leaving the house quiet and still.

"Finally," he sighed, lifting himself to his feet.

James made one more trip around the house and emptied the pans for the last time. The sun was shining low in the sky now, but James was exhausted from the rain. Slowly he got ready for bed and tucked himself under the warm, dry blankets.

The doctor said it was pneumonia and she might die. James refused to believe him. It wouldn't have changed the truth if he had, but at least he could still hope.

"What did the doctor say?" Emma asked as she shivered under the blankets. Her forehead was covered with sweat despite her chills.

"He said with plenty of rest and a little time you'll be just fine."

Emma knew he was lying, she could see it in his eyes.

James sat down beside her and wiped the sweat from her forehead. "We've been through worse than this and we pulled through; we'll get through this too, just wait and see."

"I know," Emma said. "I'll be fine, it's you I'm worried about. You've been up all day taking care on me; you must be exhausted."

"I'm fine," James replied, ignoring the heavy bags under his eyes.

"Well, I'm tired even if you're not. Just sit by me and hold my hand while I take a little nap."

James brought a chair next to the bed and sat down. He took her frail hand in his. It was icy despite her temperature. He looked at her peaceful face. It had been so long, they had been through so much. It couldn't end now. James bent down and gently kissed his wife's forehead. A tear rolled down his cheek.

"I love you," he whispered.

Someone was shaking him awake.

"James, James wake up. It's time to go."

He rolled over and opened his eyes. The bright light from the windows shone

over the figure of a woman above him. Her hair was grey and her skin wrinkled but she was the most beautiful woman James had ever seen.

"Come on James, you always did oversleep. Get up, you don't want everyone to be kept waiting do you?"

"Emma?"

"Of course it's me, who did you expect?" She took her husband's hand and led him through the house.

"Where have you been all this time? I missed you."

"I've been here all along, you just couldn't see me. But don't worry, I'll never leave again. We'll be together forever."

They stood by the front door and Emma straightened James' collar and smoothed his shirt.

"There, now you're ready. And stop crying, you should be happy now."

"I am," James said, his voice broken. He wiped the tears away and smiled at his wife.

"That's better, now let's go."

James opened the door. The street was bright but the light didn't hurt his eyes. On their front yard stood a group of people: men, women, children, all coming to greet him.

"Come on." Emma urged him out onto the lawn. "It's time to meet your new neighbors."

Philip Vanness

The Cherished Tales of Highnote

George Avery

My father was half-a-century old when I was born in 1961. I was the eighth child in a line of fourteen, and each night before bedtime I took my place upon his knee just as naturally as the siblings before me had done. In time I was displaced from my position upon this throne by my younger sister, just as I had displaced my older sister. And so it has been that over the period since the birth of the eldest child in 1951, fourteen children have slid across that sturdy knee, and it seems the grandchildren have now discovered the enchantment of the spot.

You see, my father was, and is, a master in the art of story-telling. He would capture our childish imaginations and weave them into works of art with the skill of a basketmaker, carrying us over into dream-land long before sleep would obscure our vision. He would continue his yarn just as long as it took for the last child to nod off to sleep, then he would carefully cart the three or four some odd children to their beds. He would often jokingly remark that one day his knee would be worn right through with all the traffic sliding across it. Today, now that he finds it more difficult to rise from his chair, he simply insists his knees have seen a lot of mileage.

Our small farm is located in lower Alabama near a community called Old Highnote. In the early years of my childhood, my father's stories were the

major source of entertainment. I was thirteen when we eventually got a television, but by that time I had discovered the school library and the endless volumes of adventure cached therein. Television failed to captivate me like the folds of a good novel. I have read countless books in this short run of my life, many of which I consider quite priceless. However, I prize those childhood stories, told by my father, above even these.

weight of the victim and thus acquire a hearty meal; "One-O, One-O, the polecat" who could, and did at every opportunity, face off any enemy undaunted; and "Grady, the opossum," a chicken thief. I recall the excitement that would course through my veins when, at some point within the story, someone would inquire: "Possum tail. Possum tail. Where have you been?" For I knowed, and I knowed that Grady knowed where he had been, and I knowed

—You see, my father was, and is, a master in the art of story telling.

The stories he told would revolve around the community where we lived and those central characters so familiar to our young lives. One of my preferred tales was how the Highnote community acquired its name, near the turn of the century, from the association of a veteran hound that haunted the lowlands with its piercing tongue in the early morning hours and of its futile efforts to thwart the antics of a rogue raccoon known widely as "Ransack Raccoon."

There were many regulars in these Highnote sagas: "George, the friendly alligator," who always managed to become a footlog for someone's escape when danger seemed imminent, only to sink beneath the

Grady wasn't tellin'. That became the greeting my father offered us children when we arrived to ask for a story. "Possum tail. Possum tail. Where have you been?" he would ask, and we would hoot and holler and swear we wouldn't tell.

When I was first introduced to the stories of Uncle Remus, I envisioned him looking somewhat like my father. I firmly believe there must be an inherent rule that all great yarn-spinners must have a beard. A bushy white or grey beard that hides the lower portion of one's face. A beard such that a child can grasp it with his fingers and inflict the proper amount of torture upon

the tale-teller so that he may direct the events of the story to his liking.

To this day I treasure those story telling sessions and feel them to be a dramatic influence on the shaping of my early and more recent years. From them, I developed a thirst for adventure that resulted in my eventually picking up a book and not placing it aside until the last page had been turned. Through them, I developed an early respect, love and conscientious attitude towards nature. I have always felt close to my dad. For this reason I shall attempt to chronicle an evening session as I remember it. Should my memory prove as dull as my wit, perhaps I can manage to shovel a little sand into the potholes to keep the wagon from rocking:

Late one evening, not unlike many other such afternoons, as I climbed upon my father's knee, he inquired: "Well, possum tail, what'll it be tonight?" I shrugged my shoulders, for I could never decide. It didn't matter that I could not decide, for he seldom told the same story twice even if it was his intention. He would then commence to "fueling his pipe" as he referred it and

"Have you younguns heard about how an old Tennessee grizzly bear named 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-Out' came to Highnote to prove he was better than any hound dog in Alabama?" He asked. We all assured him we hadn't. Grizzly bears were a favorite of us young children. Give us a passle of grizzly bears to scare us speechless and one good hunting dog to chew on them and make them holler and there would be a chair full of younguns hooting and hollering like they had the bear by the tail themselves.

"Of course this grizzly bear knowed that the best hound dogs in the State of Alabama were here in Highnote." He began. "This bear had gotten tired of the taste of them Tennessee hound dogs and decided to try the taste of Alabama hound dog. I guess you know there is nothing a bear likes to eat better'n hound dogs, unless, of course, it's little children." There was a sudden shuffling of little bodies, working themselves closer to the sanctity of the story teller.

"A few years earlier and this grizzly bear wouldn't have dared come within sniffing distance of Alabama, because Ol' Highnote was alive back then and there

trail a fourteen year old raccoon clear to its cradle. Not only did he know what animal made a track but he could recite its family tree clean back to the root stock. Ol' Highnote had done ate every bear in the state of Alabama. Tennessee was out of his jurisdiction and he respected that.

"However, Ol' Highnote was the last of a special breed and with his passing ended the bloodline of a pure race. Hound dogs of today are just a chip off the old boulder. There isn't a half a pint of the Old Highnote blood in any three of 'em. However, I must admit, every now and then some of that good blood will crop up and you get an outstanding pup. Nothing to compare with Ol' Highnote, you understand, but an outstanding hound dog nonetheless.

"This episode happened during the generation of pups following Ol' Highnote's passing. There was no comparing these dogs to Ol' Highnote, you understand, but in their time they were the finest raccoon dogs in the state of Alabama. Folks would gather at sunrise just to listen to them baying in the lowlands. Once they hit a trail, they would out-vocalize a church choir and their song would bear the weight of a Sunday sermon. Them dogs were the head hog at the feed trough when it come to trailing, and they were the pride of every man that lived in Highnote.

*—Hound dogs of today
are just a chip off the old boulder.*

would send up several clouds of blue smoke before beginning the story. By this time a variety of siblings, varying in ages, had congregated about and upon the chair to listen.

wasn't nothing he enjoyed better than bear steaks that squealed when he bit into them. Ol' Highnote was truly the last dog that could even come close to being called a true hound dog. Ol' Highnote could back

"However, there isn't a tree that ever took root that can stand the test of time. There are some trees that stand up and reach for the clouds so fast they don't leave time for their roots to keep pace and as soon as a sizable breeze commences to blow there is a sudden awakening in the forest. This old bear whipped into this pack of dogs as sudden as that gust of wind, and like

the afore-mentioned tree, the pack found its roots suddenly torn loose from the soil and, of a sudden, the earth rose up and slapped them in the faces. The force of the blow knocked the song right out of their throats; it knocked the dew out of the cool summer mornings and the color from the late Autumn sky. Once again, just like on the day Ol' Dixie lay down her rifle and akin to the day Ol' Highnote lay down to die, there were many a red eye and many a dry throat for many a day to come in this little Highnote holler.

"It was a sad day when Ol' 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-out' struck terror into that pack of pups. If they had had a few more years of experience under their belts, the outcome would have been quite different. But there is truth in the saying that the hardest lessons are not taught but learned. And I gotta' say, when it come to learning, them pups sat right up at the front of the class.

—Just about this time I made an effort to interrupt my Pappy's wanderings.

"I was a young fellow, not much older'n you younguns, when I heard that Ol' 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-Out' was prowling around these woods looking for trouble. It seemed to me that a pack of young hounds that had proved themselves to be the descendants of such a noble fellow as Ol' Highnote would be quite capable of chewing the tail off an old bear, especially a bear that couldn't claim to be an Alabamian. And besides, I had never hunted bears before. Ol' Highnote ate 'em all up before I was born. Therefore, I commenced to round up a group of the finer young boys of the community and we congregated before my cabin with lanterns and rifles and that pack of fine

young pups a'tugging on their leashes, while we tried to make out the tracks of the bear on the ground. 'It was a big one,' says I. 'It stood out here in the moonlight, just as big as life itself, waving its arms and

—"It was a sad day when Ol' 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-Out' struck terror into that pack of pups."

growling and a'begging for the dogs to come out and play. They might'a done it too, had they not been penned up. But I got my rifle and smoked its britches to get it a'runnin. When these dogs get on its trail, we're going to have one memorable night.'

"'Are you sh-shore it was a bear?' asked Johnny Shivers, who was better known to us a 'Long John.' Long John was a tall, lanky boy who taked funny, but a person was smart not to let on he thought so. Long

John acquired a permanent speech impediment following an episode where he ketched a wounded, full-grown raccoon in his arms when it had been knocked out of a tree by a poorly placed rifle ball. The raccoon quickly ate his way through Long John's shirt and escaped through his britches leg. Long John had been shaking like a leaf in the wind ever since, and that's what fetched him his name.

"'The la-la-last bear in th-these parts,' resumed Long John, 'was ki-kilt off before we 'uns were born.'

"'Suppose that track could belong to Seth Marlowe?' spoke up little Jess Cooper. 'Seth could pass for a bear any day.'

"'Nope, it wasn't no Marlowe that made these tracks,' put in Luther Plunkett. 'These is definitely bear tracks.' We called Luther by the nickname of 'Sunshine' because he had accompanied Long John on the night

of his mishap with the raccoon. Only, when it was over, Luther appeared to think it was funny. So funny indeed, that he was three weeks recuperating from the licking Long John commenced to put upon him. When he awoke he was smiling. When asked how come he was so jovial after so recently returning from the near edges of death, he confided that he had done witnessed the pinnacle of comedy when that raccoon had come clawing, spitting, and scratching out of Long John's britches leg. Seems he could never get the image of the episode out of his head and wore a grin on his face from that day on that threatened to split his face apart. When he died, some many years later, the grin on his face got loose and split into the ground right beneath his feet, swallowing him up and saving his widow the cost of a funeral. Only that grinning hole in the ground kept getting larger and begun swallowing up entire farms and drinking up every drop of rain-water that fell from the sky. It's a knowed fact hereabouts that the first conservation program this Country ever started was begun simply to restrain the size of Ol' Sunshine's grin before it swallowed up the whole State."

Just about this time I made an effort to interrupt my Pappy's wanderings. I was getting a mite sleepy and he hadn't quite yet got around to where the dogs commenced to tasting Grizzly Bear. "Why, I was just getting back to that," says he.

"Like I was saying, Sunshine made like he figured it was one of them fifteen-year bears. The kind of bear that hibernates for fifteen years and then wakes up with a fierce hunger. Only, Jess Cooper put in that Sunshine had no idea what he was talking about. Jess said that the only fifteen-year animal wasn't a bear at all but a insect, and a locust at that. He said these fifteen-year locusts came around every July and just sit in the trees a sparking the lady locusts, only to drop dead after a week of sporting. Only it didn't make sense how, if they were fifteen-year locusts, they managed to show up every year. That's when I recommended we stop arguing the manner and type of bear, and commence to doing some serious tracking. We all glanced nervously up at the night sky; it appeared like the clouds overhead were about to rattle and rumble and put in to raining cats and dogs.

"Them young dogs knowed a hunt was on for the night and they were all for it. The problem was these pups had only tangled with raccoons and wildcats. They

manual that passes down through the generations. Trouble was, the Highnote bloodline of these hounds had become so diluted, that the reference manual was missing a few pages. For this reason the bear smell didn't register. These hounds had never seen a bear before and didn't have any idea that such a animal existed. Why, Ol' Ike looked over at his trailing companion Blue and says, 'Whoo, boy! This ol'raccoon ain't ever washed his feet in his lifetime.' Ol' Sue, however, a long-legged, yellow hound, being sort of a throwback to a richer bloodline, placed her tail betwixt her legs and began to backstep towards the porch. We promptly dragged her back to the scent. Unawares of their ignorance, them pups takened off after that bear like they was heading for a Sunday picnic. The yellow hound, however, lingered a while as if to get permission to remain behind. Finding no such luck, she set off at a lope to catch up with the pack.

"That ain't like Sue,' I remarked. 'She's usually one of the first to take to a trail.'

"Once the hounds were out of sight they fell into their natural hunting formation. Ol' Ike, the black and tan, was in the lead, running with his nose halfway to the ground. To an unpracticed eye, it would seem that he was the finest trailer of the pack. To be truthful, he was a faker. He ran with his head canted sideways so as to keep an eye on the two beagles directly behind him. The two beagles, Buck and Blue, were the true trackers of the pack. They could follow a trail that had lain two weeks fallow, but their shorter legs could not compete with those of Ike. The fourth dog was named Nail. What exact breed of dog she was, I cannot say. Her short legs and long ears kept tangling one another and each step threatened to spill her on her nose. For some unexplainable reason she always managed to follow close at the heels of Buck. Sue, as of yet, had not caught up with the pack. But she stuck to the trail, never casting a sideways glance.

"Ol' Blue, having the keenest nose, knew they had gained considerably on the scent. He gave tongue excitedly and Ike put on a fresh burst of speed. Through brush and puddles and over logs they raced in pursuit of their hapless quarry, pushing relentlessly onward until they could hear its reckless flight in the darkness ahead. No longer was it necessary to seek the scent on the ground, it was riding on the wind. They was slobbering on his very heels when that grizzly bear turned about and said 'Howdy!'

"Ol' Ike pulled up fast.

"Whoa fellers!' he shouted. 'This ain't no ordinary coon child.'

"We hear you,' answered Blue, coming to a skidding halt. 'His mamma has done forgot to wean this one.'

— "Them young dogs knowed a hunt was on for the night and they were all for it."

had never seen a bear track. So what would you expect them to do once we let 'em loose on the bear smell? Them pups reacted like they'd stepped unawares upon a rattlesnake. You ain't seen no dogs hoppin' and jumpin' around until you seen them pups.

"There is something way back in a dog's skull that registers a scent, sort of a reference

"Sh-she's just got more s-sense than any of the rest of 'em,' said Long John. 'Any dog with an ounce of s-s-sense wouldn't be in no hurry to take out after a bear.' Well, for my money, he couldn't have been more correct. Nothing else was spoken, as all thoughts were on the chase. A light rainfall had begun, soaking us to the skin. Our feet sank into the mud with each step. All in all, it was a wonderful night to start a hunt.

"The bigger they is, the better they battle," said Buck. "Let's get 'im."

"Hold it, Buck!" shouted Ike. "Let's not be too anxious in this matter. He looks a might tough for the four of us to handle all by ourseleves. Let's wait for Sue and then maybe the five of us can worry him until the menfolks get here."

"More like he'll worry us," put in Blue.

"Listen here, fellers," answered Buck. "I've chased this fellow for seven miles. I'm wet, bruised, and downright miserable. My feet are sore, my eyes are watering, and the vines have all but cut me to pieces. I didn't come this far to sit down and let someone else take over. I've earned my reputation as the stout-heartedest hound of this pack and no overgrown coon-chile is gonna make me renege on my honor."

With these words, Ol' Buck rushed upon the cornered fugitive with the yell of a banshee. The bear, however, greeted him with open arms, as they say, that closed with a death grip. Now this bear, he had visited the Highnote homestead in hopes of satisfying a craving for dog meat. He liked the flavor of pork, and yearlings held a special place in his dietary requirements, but he was overly fond of hound dog. It was his immediate intention to make a meal of the hapless Buck, the unfortunate lightweight champion of the rough and tumble, who for the first time found himself trying to wriggle free of an adversary. The bear would have finished him had not the other hounds attacked. Instead, Buck was somersaulted through the air to land in a heap. With a roundhouse swing of its forepaw the bear sent Ike tumbling along the ground with a yelp of pain. The two

remaining dogs sprang clear and the beast rushed upon the still-shaken Buck.

Buck had got back on his feet faster than you could pitch a stick, but it was too slow. By the time he had shaken the cobwebs from his eyes his destiny was upon him. Ol' 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-Out' grabbed Ol' Buck up once again and began to stuff him into his mouth. And so it would have ended for poor Buck had not a (woman) intervened.

"Nail, the little short-legged hound, it seems had maintained a private eye on Buck since puppyhood, and was not about to stand and watch the hound of her dreams destroyed by a full crazed, overgrown coon chile. She grabbed up the smoking rifle, as the saying goes, and renewed the assault on the bear. Ol' 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-Out' had no idea what come over him all of a sudden. He had no idea he was anywhere's near a hive of killer bees. But that's what happens when you raise the fury in one of God's woman-type creatures. They indiscriminately clean house."

At this my daddy would chuckle way down low in this chest and pause a moment to overhear the steady clatter of after-dinner dishes arising from the kitchen.

"Thus," he resumed, "Ol' 'Known-im-Down, Drag-im-Out' got a house-cleaning of sorts. He might have been finished up once and for all had not Ol' Buck regained his wits about him and run for safety. Lo', did he go. And Nail couldn't let her man run off all by himself, she followed at his heels. You'd have thought a thunderbolt was after him, the way he ran. He had

his tail tucked so far betwixt his hind legs, that his hind legs outran his forelegs. His ears trailed so far behind they got lost twice before catching up.

Ike and Blue suddenly found themselves the only two soldiers at the fort, as they say. Ike was nursing a cut along his shoulder where a claw had caught hold and Blue had blood trickling from an ear.

"You know what, Blue?" suddenly spoke up Ol' Ike. "This reminds me of the time us fellers had Ol' 'Bull Whip' Tom holed up in that thar' cave back in the hills. We was conducting a vote on whether we should send someone in to flush him out, and up speaks Ol' Patchwork. You remember him, that old redbone with the missing eye and the wonderful patchwork job that the obliging animal doctor conducted whilst putting him back together. Patchwork, he says he'd be obliged if we'd let him go in, 'cause, although he hadn't ever exactly tangled with a wildcat before he'd been doing some thinking along the lines of the matter. To my way of thinking, says Ol' Patchwork, there ain't nothing to make up the anatomy of a wildcat but a pair of ears, a set of teeth, four sets of claws, and a belly of hair, and all of these, he assured us, could be accounted for in a rough and tumble."

"I remember quite clearly," replies Blue, "but I can't seem to unnerstand what you're getting at."

"Well, don't you see?" resumes Ike. "Patchwork goes into that cave and pretty soon we hears a explosion, such like one hears when the master plants a dynamite charge agin the base of a stump and blasts it out of the ground. The noise and the dust and the fur and the blood and the sound of cracking bones coming from the

inside of that cave nearabouts sends us a scampering fer home when just as suddenly it gets quiet. After a bit, just when we was about to send in a search and rescue expedition, Patchwork drages himself out into the sunlight. Laying there in a pool of his own blood and squinting up at us from that one good eye he had somehow managed to salvage he says that during all the excitement, he seemed to have forgotten to account for the tail.'

"I must be a mite slow,' replies Blue, 'cause I ain't got a foggy notion of where you're coming from.'

"It's just this,' says Ike, 'during our recent altercation with this 'coon chile I did a quick inventory and couldn't account for its tail.'

— "I must be getting a mite slow,' replies Blue, 'cause I ain't got a foggy notion of where you're coming from.'"

"Well, don't accuse me of taking it,' replies Blue. 'The only thing I got away with was these stars a'dancing about my head.'

"Whatever we do partner,' says Ike, 'we gotta make sure the little feller don't take notice of that missing portion of his anatomy. What do we know but he'll blame one of us for taking it.'

"While this conversation resumed between the two noble hunting companions, the bear stood weaving to and fro on its hind legs, looking wildly about, trying to figure exactly where that hive of killer hornets had attacked from. He was uncertain whether to stand still or run off into the brush. These two dogs would make a tasty meal but, dablast the luck, these Alabama hound dogs were too elusive for catching aholt of.

"Way back yonder when your Grandfather was a youngster some fellow wrote a book on the laws, rules and regulations of a true hound dog's trained intellect. It contains quite a deal of literature that's interesting if not useful. I sould personally recommend that every hunter read it and, if possible, read it aloud to his hounds. He'd be surprised at the results. The chances are they might pick up a few pointers.

"Now, Ike and Blue prided themselves in their trailing ability and their strict adherence to the law. They had trailed the spoor, cornered the prey, and now they must detain it until help arrived. From the size of the overgrewed coon child it promised to be quite eventful, however, it was theirs to do.

"Nearby in the cover of a huckleberry bush sat Ol' Rascal, the raccoon. His wanderings had been interrupted by the skirmish between the bear and hounds and he thought it best to seek cover until trouble passed. But Ol' Man Trouble never had and never would pass Ol' Rascal by without stopping for a chat.

"When Rascal was a youngster he'd read the aforementioned book on hound dogs. His Pa, Ol' Ransack Raccoon, told him that anything worth printing is worthy of reading. Therefore he read anything and everything he could get his hands on. He acquired his knowledge, you might say, through the minds of men. Through past experience he was assured that Ike and Blue were true hounds. They'd as soon set their

tails afire as to abandon a trail, especially whence the quarry was at bay. Thusly assured, himself being hungry and remembering where the clams washed up on the creek bed, he decided to chance it. Hiking up his tail he scampered forward and across the clearing. He was just about to gain one small bit of wisdom that he would late underwrite into the aforementioned book. Modern hound dogs are such fickle creatures.

"Meanwhile the bear sat himself down on his haunches and began to dream himself up some recipes with hound dog as the main ingredient; whereas Buck and Blue was a praying hard for the cavalry to get there, and quick. They saw the raccoon rush past and, for a second, paid it no mind. Then, of a sudden, a thought fell across Ike's brow and he glanced over at Blue. Somehow, it appears, Blue shared the same thoughts and was already looking Ike's way. They both nodded, arbitrarily, like dogs sometimes will and, before you could pitch a stick, were in pursuit of the raccoon. Their voices picked up with the renewed vigor of the chase. Behind them, us hunters believed the bear to be on the run again.

"The bear, Ol' 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-Out', shook his head in disappointment, not quite sure whether to set out in pursuit of the hounds or go his own way. He was missing out on a good meal of hound-dog stew. But all of a sudden he derived a new plan. If he circled back toward the farmhouse and got there ahead of everyone else, he would find it unprotected. Sure. Why not? He would settle for eating a young calf, or perhaps a letter of pigs, or even, maybe," my daddy added as an afterthought, "even, perhaps a youngun or two."

A number of little faces were looking toward the storyteller in utter horror.

once again. The raccoon was forgotten. Ike and Blue stood hesitant beneath the tree.

much more careful in the future and lived to make a name for himself almost as big as his daddy's.

—A number of little faces were looking toward the storyteller in utter horror.

"The great big grizzly bear swung about and crashed into the brush. Moments later, a yellow hound arrived on the scene. She hesitated only a moment, then trotted across the clearing with her nose to the ground. She was aware of what had transpired in the clearing. She knew the others had deserted the trail, but that was no concern of hers. She knew her own duty. She had taken the tail of the bear and she would follow it through as was expected of her. A high droning wail escaped her tongue as she sped down the newly fresh trail. Ah! What a divine dog, this Sue. Somewhere in the darkness ahead Ol' 'Knock-im-Down, Drag-im-Out' heard this new tracker on his trail and thought, perhaps, he might acquire that highly treasured taste of hound dog after all.

"Elsewhere we had overtaken Ike and Blue. The two evertrustful hounds had caught up with their quarry. Rascal sat atop a limb regretting his hasty judgement and making peace with the spirits that had made him. His days of masquerading appeared to be near their gloomy end. However, we were not interested in raccoons this night. It was quite evident that the hounds had erred. What of the others? The night was quiet but for the rain which came down in a steady curtain. Yet, at that instant the low quailing voice of Sue came to us through the patter of the rain on the forest floor.

"It's S-S-Sue!" shouted Long John. "Sh-She's still on the scent."

"Quicker than you could pitch a stick at a nest of hornets we was off running

Here was a trophy worth hours of trailing. Here in this tree sat a wily ol' codger that had disappointed them on many a chase. Yet the hunters did not bother to collect its pelt.

"You don't suppose," asked Ike, "that them fellers realize we traded the trail of that young, overgrown and inexperienced coon chile fer the treeing of this more experienced veteran, now do you?"

"I got an idea that them menfolks has got noses as powerful as our own," answered Blue. "You said yoreself that that coon chile smelt like he hadn't washed his feet in a lifetime."

"Well then," says Ike, "We'd best git on after them and make amends afore we git ourselves bogged up in deep water."

— "I'm with you there partner," answered Blue."

"I'm with you there partner," answered Blue.

"A little while later Rascal dismounted the tree, slowly, fearful that someone was playing a cruel trick. He sniffed the wind, raised his forepaws to the sky in a silent prayer of thanks, and set off at a rapid pace for his home. I must add that Rascal seldom made mistakes. A fellow in his line of work couldn't afford to make mistakes. He was

"Ike and Blue struck Sue's trail ahead of us, only, too soon, it came to an end. The earth had been scratched up in a terrible way and the brush beaten down as if two large beasts had grappled and rolled about on the ground. There were teeth marks in the trees and scratch marks in the clouds. There were large blood-sucking swamp mosquitoes frozen in the air, in a state of suspended shock, horrified over the terrible and brutal battle they had witnessed. It must have been a terrifying struggle indeed to so frighten a mosquito, whose business it was of drawing blood. There was no sign of Sue. The rain had begun to fall in torrents now, the bear's trail was washed away. For the first time the two hounds, Ike and Blue, realized the costliness of their sin. Not only had they deserted a trail, they had deserted a comrade as well. They sulked off into the night with their tails dragging. The hunting party turned reluctantly toward home. There was to be no more hunting this night. The rain had slackened and daylight was minutes away. Ike and Blue followed us home, but remained in the shadows.

"We soon learned the cost of putting our prize 'coon dogs on the tail of a bear. So terrible was Ol' Buck's character changed after his skirmish with the bear that he would altogether refuse to take a trail. He had become a fearful and quaking shadow of his former self. Even Nail became worthless for anything other than catering for the needs of the hound she loved. When it came to Buck, she was as fussy as a setting hen. Buck had become a miserly creature whose soul cried for the

peace it had been robbed of. One day he just up and walked away from Highnote, the only signs he left behind was the footsteps of Nail following close at the heels of his own.

"Of the five hounds, only two took to trailing the Highnote woods again. Even they could not revitalize the old resonance of their voices that had delighted the multitudes of yesterday. These two hounds were Ike and Blue and, in the words of an ancient seafaring man I once met in a tavern during The War, 'a wiser and a sadder' hound they each had become."

At this, my daddy had finished his tale. He knocked the ashes from his pipe onto the armrest of the chair, an occurrence that seemed to irritate my mother to no end (and still does to this day), as he prepared to arise from his chair.

To a young fellow such as myself, at the time, the story was far from finished and I wiped at the moisture that had somehow began to escape from my eyes.

"But whatever became of Sue?" I asked.

"What?" said he. "Sue? Yes. Why she was just fine. It appears the bear didn't eat her up at all. Seems she was a throwback to an earlier time. Once she had tangled with that bear there in the brush and sent him scampering for the high country, she realized she was a bear dog and, being a bear dog, she commenced to trailing him right on out of Highnote. They say she finally ketched 'im up in Tennessee and spent the rest of her life trailing bears up in the Tennessee hills."

"Didn't she never come back home?" I asked.

"Nope!" he replied. "She was too happy up in them hills."

This wasn't the first time I had listened to a Tale as such. I noticed my daddy hadn't

bothered to refill his pipe, a sure indication that he was ready for bed himself. He had a way of sort of abruptly finishing a Tale whence the time had crawled on by, and I knowed if'n I didn't ask my questions that night while the details were fresh on his memory, come tomorrow he would be a mite elusive about the answers. And besides, I wasn't none too happy about the way it was ending for Ol' Buck and Nail.

"What about Buck?" I asked. "Didn't him and Nail ever come back home?"

"Course they did." says he. "Ol' Buck merely set off to regain his lost honor. He wasn't able to live under the burden of his shame any longer and set off on the cold trail of that bear. Why, him and Nail was with Sue when she ketched up with the varmint up in Tennessee. You wouldn't think she could whup the critter all alone would you? Nossirree! Ol' Buck gave that bear such a work over that it swore off eating hound dog meat altogether. Then, Ol' Buck, he placed Nail over his knee and gave her a whipping. They both came back home to Highnote together and raised a passel of pups."

My Pappy leaned forward in his chair. "It's getting about your bedtime, lad." says he, wiping away the tears that had stained my cheeks. "It looks like you might be catching the sniffles here in this night air. It's best you run on up to your bed now and perhaps"

....his words tailed away. For, at that moment, the curtain of sleep was drawn and I found myself enshrouded in a mystical realm where a body could run with the hounds through the stillness of the night and the sanctity of the woodland walls. My feet scarcely touched the forest floor as, like the wind, I sped through the myriad of trees keeping pace at the side of a yellow hound, chasing bears through the hills of Tennessee.

George Avery

celebration of struggle

i need the wind to push me
where i don't want to go
i need the rain to remind me of the water in my blood
and the frost to make my veins pulse warmth
i need the tide to suck my legs
and make my body declare its intention to survive
i need the rock that slips under my climbing foot
and makes me grab for branches that exceed my reach
i need the thunder with its power to terrify
and the suspense of darkness to keep me guessing.

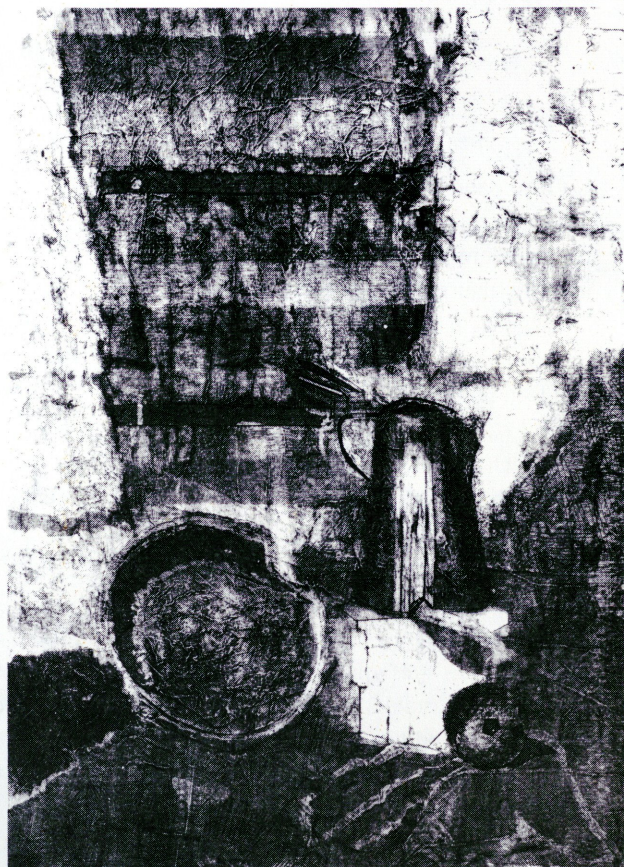
i need the weeds that punctuate sidewalks
and the upheavals of roots
that twist our shapely gardens
and the crows that circle
with their one impatient question
are you alive?

i need to feel sorrow
encasing me in stone
with a voice like a great, lasting echo
asking why live on?
to which i have many answers and none.

Lisa Kuperstein



Mark Erquitt



BLUE BONNETS

Two hands and a heart are all you need for sculpting, Glory's art professor says. He paces the room with long strides and an intensity that makes her nervous.

"There's no thinking involved, here. No time limit. No test score. Just hearts and hands in motion," he says. "Don't use your head. Let your hands experiment and your heart feel...feel...feel." He repeats the word with each slow step. "For every one of you, somewhere deep within, something is struggling to break loose—to release itself and take form. Now let it form."

The art students, many wearing pained expressions — eyes squinted shut or mouths gaping open, mold their clay with mud-caked hands and hearts.

In her corner, Glory stands crouched over her mound of earthen art. She holds her breath and bites her lip and aches down inside. There's nothing in her, she thinks, nothing but distractions. Her heart and hands don't communicate yet with the clay.

The guy across from her notices. "You're new, aren't you?"

"Yeah. Pretty obvious."

"Not really. Not because of your work, anyway. Just because of your necklace."

"My what?"

"That necklace you're wearing. Only new students wear jewelry. You wear it around here, and you ruin it or lose it in the clay."

"Oh..." Glory wants to take off her necklace and forget she's new, but her hands are muddy and her long hair is loose on her neck. She stares blankly at her clay-stained fingers, instead.

"Here. Let me help you," he says, wiping

his hands on his dirty sweatshirt, first the palms, then the backsides, and stepping out from behind the table.

"Nice...Is it a feal flower?" He's staring down at the pendant on her chest. He's too close. His hands brush against the skin beneath her hair. They feel cool on the back of her neck and his forearms smell like clay. Quickly, easily, he releases the clasp.

"Yeah. It was dipped in silver." She's flustered now, uncomfortable at the nearness. He holds the five-petaled pendant in his open palm, examining it.

"What kind is it?" he's asking. "I've never seen one like this."

"It's a Blue Bonnet. They don't grow in the North. It came from Texas...where I'm from." He nods and looks at it more closely then stares at her thick red hair and her long neck and smiles at her as he puts it onto the table between them. She feels her skin turning red. She can't say anything.

She wants to tell him this pendant was a gift from her great-grandmother, the one she was named after. And she wants to tell him that in her whole family, only she and her great-grandmother, Glory, have had the red hair. It's known to skip several generations. She also wants to tell him she's never been to Boston before, or any place further north than Colorado and that she's never taken sculpting, except in an introductory art class at U.T. But she doesn't tell him anything.

Instead she just says, "It's...our state flower." He smiles again, then steps away.

"To be a good sculptor, first you empty your mind, then you work from within," her professor says from across the room. "You work from a deeper source..."

I've never seen a Blue Bonnet farther north than Austin, really. They grow mostly in the fields between the barren, rocky lands in the middle of Texas. Especially in Travis County, and my hometown, a place called Elgin, right in the middle of Blue Bonnet country. There's only about 10,000 people, but we're known all over Texas for our sausage and hogs. There's lots of grasslands and rolling hills there. That's where Blue Bonnets grow best. not much else grows there, only a few small cedars in patches until you get to Austin. It's nothing like the Northeast...not so diverse.

"So what are you doing here?" He's still watching her.

What am I doing here?...What am I doing here? What am I doing here?

"I just meant what brought you all the way up to Boston from Texas." He says, still waiting for an answer.

Glory hears herself saying that she wanted to get away from home for a while, and she wanted to be closer to the good art schools and galleries and museums in

the East, and also that the graduate program here gave her an art fellowship.

"I'm impressed," he says.

"Well, really I don't know quite what I'm doing here. I haven't figured it out yet," she adds. "I'm still lost in the crowd, I guess."

He's laughing. "You're an artist at heart. I can tell already."

He's nothing like Tote, she notices, but they do look a lot alike — both tall and dark with deep eyes and nice smiles.

"Sometimes it helps to take a new perspective. Try moving to the other side of your table and working your clay from there for a while," the professor says to the class.

The guy's back brushes against Glory as he relocates. She sees he's working on something that looks like a Texas beehive with eight or ten stubby spokes coming out of the top. Her clay is still just an undefined, slippery glob, like the mud from Elgin pig farms.

I went off to college in Austin to study art. But she doesn't cry over me anymore. She says I'm gone for good, now. She thinks I'm crazy.

"So tell me more about that flower, Red."

"What? Oh, you mean my necklace?"

"Your silver Blue Bonnet. Remember?"

"...Sure...They grow wild, by the thousands."

"Really?"

"Yeah...my part of Texas is pretty flat. During the spring, you can drive for miles and see them everywhere...They even grow in the cracks in the road."

"Well do they come in any shade other than silver?" he asks. Glory smiles without looking up from her clay.

"They're blue. They're all blue."

"That makes sense," he says, and he turns back to his work.

it got, they always had water drops on them. And I'd wonder if I had stepped on a white one.

"Oh, and sometimes they're white, too." Glory's hands work faster and easier with the clay now. She doesn't have to slow down to talk.

He takes his hands off his clay and turns to look at her. "The Blue Bonnets? We're talking about the Blue Bonnets again now," he says. "...So they're not all blue, then."

"Right, but in all those fields of blue Blue Bonnets, only once in a while, if you're lucky, can you spot a white one. They say that only one in every 10 thousand turns out white. It's supposed to be some sort of natural genetic hybrid that makes them that way...I don't really know. But I always liked them the best."

"Why?" he asks.

Why? She'd never really thought why. "Because...the white one always stands out, I guess..."

"Yeah. I suppose it would."

—*"Sometimes it helps to take a new perspective."*

Things are a lot different in Elgin. My dad's a large animal vet, and in Travis County, all there is for a vet to work with are pig farms and a few cattle ranches. He used to take me out with him on days he had to farrow pigs. my older sisters never liked to go and my brothers were still too young then. My mom didn't think it was good for me to be around all those Mexican farm hands, but I didn't care. She and I never got along. She always wanted me to get married after high school like my sisters. She cried when I broke up with Tote Turner. Mom liked him because he's the Chevrolet dealer's son, and she thought he had a good future. He was stable, he just didn't stand out. She also cried when

I used to love to pick them. It's illegal because they're the state flower, so you're fined 50 dollars if you're caught. You're never caught, though. I always filled my room with them. I'd get old Coke cans and empty ketchup bottles and put them all over the place. But they withered up so fast, so I'd usually have dead Blue Bonnets surrounding me. Sometimes on dry nights, I used to get really hot and restless. I'd sneak downstairs, out through the back door, and I'd walk around all alone in the field behind our house, just in my nightgown and bare feet. I couldn't see them at all, but I knew they were there. I'd lay down in them and feel the breeze blow them against my skin. no matter how dry

I never picked a white one. They're so rare, I didn't want one to wither and die. But the white one probably wouldn't wither like the rest. It looks a little fuller and stands a little taller against all the blue ones. I guess they're stronger — maybe it really does skip a generation or something.

"Class, I notice a lot of you are sculpting objects now. I see a clown face over here and an owl back there. But remember, what I want is for you to evoke a feeling, not an object. This is 'avant garde' sculpture, if you will. We want free-form works, so don't worry with thinking about what you're doing. Just reflect. Try reflecting on your fantasies and your dreams. See what you find." Her professor paces past her as he speaks. And she continues.

I like the mornings best. They were always bright and sunny, and I could spot the one white Blue Bonnet out of the thousands easily. It made me feel good. I'd run through the field toward the white speck, barefoot with my hair down, trailing behind me, until I'd lost my breath. I'd spin round and round, out of control, then sink down on my back into the field, all alone, hidden from the rest of the world in Blue Bonnets. Then I'd keep as still as I could. Nothing would happen. I wouldn't expect anything to. I was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the tiny flowers, and I didn't want to be anything more. I was entirely happy. When that feeling came to me, it came as naturally as sleep.

Her professor looks over her shoulder. "Good work," he says. She's startled. Her hands fumble with the clay. The man takes her hands and shows her how to mold clay again, as if she didn't already know. She's just flustered. Why couldn't he have watched her work minutes ago, when she was good and her hands were stable. Why did he have to stop her.

But the problem was, it would never last long. Mom would be screaming out the kitchen window telling me to help with chores, or the boys would find me and tease me. And then, before too long, they'd always wither and die, and then the fields would be brown and bare. They'd never last but a couple of weeks. And when they'd died, I'd dread the coming of summer. It was always hot and dry, and I had nothing to do but help my dad with his work...or listen to my mom complain.

The guy across from her is leaving now. She notices that most of the students are. He's looking at what she's done. "I like this," he says, nodding. "A lot. There's something different about it. Something nice, and strong. It's still rough, I know. But it's simple, and it's dynamic..." He's smiling. "I look forward to seeing the finished project."

Why couldn't that feeling have lasted for more than just a few moments? And why did all the Blue Bonnets have to die so soon after they bloomed? Maybe that's

the way it feels when we die and become a part of something entire, whether it's sun and air, or goodness and knowledge. Whatever it is, that's the happiness I used to feel, dissolved into something complete and great, yet separate, different...strong and dynamic...

She watches him leaving. He stops in the doorway and looks back at her. "Hey," he says to her, pointing towards the table, "Don't forget your Blue Bonnet,"

She wipes her hands on her blouse and smiles as he leaves.

"I'll bet it's a white one."

Evan Hanby



W A T E R C O L O R



SKETCHES

TORSO

an experience of beauty vanishing.
the grey rose a blossoming rib cage-
the dusty mirror reflecting darkness.
an inert perception of absence:
the ever-receding definition-

Again at night she is there,
at the desk, her spine a still
arc curving at the bright
neck, yet I've never known
her unimagined face, her eyes
as she types, fingers defacing
the keys in the shadow of her gaze.
(Her typing is no cascade. Her paper
is too dry for flowers.) I cannot
read the poems she types on black
paper but I am certain it is always
identical. Until, from behind,
out of the light, I watch her
quick fingers. / I cannot change my life.

Tom Neeley



The Shrew's Caveat

During the first week of fall quarter, two guys who could not walk softly moved into the apartment above ours. They consistently kept inhuman hours, even during midterms, and they often bounced on their kitchen floor what from our place sounded and felt like a medicine ball. And of course they talked loudly; almost anyone who cannot walk softly can neither speak below a coarse bellow. They carried on together about football, speaking assertively from the belly about wishbones, I-backs and crosshatching blocking schemes.

Heather and I enjoy football as much as the next woman, but we also need to study and sleep, so I called the manager.

"The residents in B-10 walk too loud?" she said.

"And are bouncing a ball in the kitchen."

"And bouncing a ball in the kitchen. Well. I don't know what all I can do about them walking in their own apartment, but bouncing a ball may be a violation."

Predictably, the lease contained no express injunction against ball-bouncing — didn't even mention it. After lunch that day Heather announced she would study in the Engineering building.

"And what will I do?" I said. She was forsaking me. I was tethered to my word processor.

"I have a circuits test tomorrow," she said. "I can't help any by staying here in all this racket."

"I have a ten-page paper on *The Sound and the Fury* due next week and I can't figure out who's dead and who's alive!"

"So come with me. Write it longhand and type it in later."

Heather left me. She knows I can't write longhand, that I must have the freedom to quickly try different ways of saying it, subbing words in and out of play, bleeding the copy from my right brain. My first tries at any sentence or paragraph are messy, and they're like people — let them set too long and they can never really change.

I called a classmate in the Faulkner course, Elgin Dannely, who must have been the only football player ever at this university to endure to the 400-level courses in the English curriculum. Elgin was intelligent, the offspring of two Ole Miss English professors, and even he couldn't distinguish between dead and live persons in the novel. I told him to come on over, we'd figure something out. He brought only his immaculate paperback of *The Sound and the Fury*. He held it between thumb and forefinger like an unleavened communion cracker.

"How can you write with that din upstairs?"

I pointed to my cursor, blinking green, alone on a field of black. "So far I'm sterile, barren," I said.

"I'll ask them to keep it down," he said,

—After a few seconds the ball stopped bouncing; then the loud conversation stopped.

squeezing back through the door. Through the commotion I faintly heard his feet solidly landing one above the other, ascending the stairs. I heard him knock politely, five patient raps. After a few

seconds the ball stopped bouncing. Then the loud conversation stopped. Even their footsteps became more quiet, muffled as if the boys had removed hiking boots and now padded about in socks.

Upon his return, Elgin said offhandedly, "All you need to do is ask them."

I replied, "Maybe that's all someone as big as you has to do."

"You evidently haven't even tried," he said. "They're both bigger than I am, and nice guys. Freshmen walk-ons from Tupelo. I say Lannie's a shoo-in for a scholarship. I guess it just never occurred to them that tossing a basketball around might annoy downstairs neighbors."

I groaned. "Bigger than you and that stupid? I'll never keep them quiet."

Elgin shrugged impatiently. "Maybe they've never had downstairs neighbors before. They're quiet now, aren't they?" Elgin didn't understand because people always quiet down and move their cars and say excuse me for people like Elgin. And it's not that he's huge — some small men can get that sort of respect, not to mention women. I can't figure it out — it's just that way.

In the freshness of new quiet we studied selections of the novel. When we discovered that Faulkner had given two characters the name of Quentin, one a boy and one a girl, we felt we were partners in secret

knowledge, namely this: William Cuthbert Falkner, the redneck from rural Mississippi who quietly added a U to his last name to give it a European ring, has played a grand joke on literati worldwide — we continue reading his work in puzzled reverence, arguing and trying to decipher while he must laugh out loud in his grave at our taking it all so seriously.

Upstairs they had turned on the TV to the local news, and had turned the volume up, and were shouting at each other, or perhaps at the newscasters, but in our joy at discovering the secret we weren't distracted long. We took turns at the word processor, manufacturing English paper fluff until we had two full papers to turn in. We flipped for first choice. I won the toss and kept the better paper.

Near the end of the quarter I found I had built up a noise tolerance. I woke to my alarm clock, and only after showering did I notice the banging around upstairs. I could read or write for twenty and thirty minutes at a time, oblivious to the noise until a particularly good effort jarred me into attention. Ten minutes later I would have forgotten the interruption, again buried in words. Although this Dolby Noise Reduction of the mind filtered out enough noise to let me sleep and read and write, I could not help wistfully remembering how much more peaceful and productive my life had been without the interruptions. I could not understand why they didn't sleep regular hours, why they didn't study occasionally; one would think that after five hours of practice and game films and workouts and team meetings every day, they wouldn't have time for anything except quiet, intense homework.

I waited in private anticipation for them to crack, marching them through fantasies of nervous breakdowns, crying fits, flunking out, faintings at practice. I knew that sooner or later, in an inscrutable manifestation of natural selection, bad things happen to irresponsible people. And though the punishment often seems severe, it is only just, only right that the hindering dead weight of society is jettisoned while we the responsible, we the productive, fly still higher, still faster — managing bank trusts, building fiber optic networks, washing the dishes.

But I confess that near the end of the quarter, I began to doubt. The boys upstairs continued as they always had from the beginning of the quarter, and I wondered if no bad thing would befall them. It seemed their bodies and minds could absorb the abuse. My noise filter failed me, and like a forbidden radio broadcast my life was once again jammed by interference. I brooded, and not only because I paid rent for an apartment in which I could never be sure of sleep or quiet study: I brooded because those friends in high school who drove new sports cars away from their seventeenth birthday parties might not finally learn one day that wealth comes from someone's hard work: I brooded because some men who have always and incorrigibly let their mothers and girlfriends and wives wash their clothes will graduate and marry and live and die without ever learning to separate whites from dark colors: I brooded because some students who read only Cliff Notes write papers that score A. My notions about justice seemed dead wrong.

Then Lannie won the scholarship predicted by Elgin, and I was broken, defeated. The resulting blowout began at five o'clock on a Wednesday evening when the football players free from practice piled up the stairs dragging kegs of beer — old-fashioned wooden-barrel kegs, three of them, which proclaimed that this party, like teeth, was meant to last.

Since I had no immediate writing to do, only reading, I fled to the library with a vague pitying goodwill towards the revelers. Let them enjoy themselves in their own shallow way, I thought; most of them will never know anything better. Three hours and one hundred fifty-two pages of dense Falkner later, I returned to find the party grown out of all control. The people had spilled out of the door and stood drinking and dancing and talking along the balcony and down the stairs to the strip of grass that served for the building's front yard, where steaks were broiling over smoking charcoal grilles. Elgin, wearing an apron and a paper chef's hat, tended one of the grilles. I snatched his barbecue fork.

"Make them leave!" I shouted. "Make them shut up! I pay rent here, Elgin!"

"Pipe down and give me that fork," he said.

"Hey," commented a spindly girl in tie-dye earrings. "Some hag is trying to crash Lannie's party."

"No way," someone else said. "Selfish hag. She's got a barbecue fork, too — like, helter skelter."

Elgin hugged me close so that I couldn't move or speak. I couldn't even breathe.

"Just a little drunk, is all," he said cheerfully. "She'll be alright."

"Helter Skelter," breathed the girl abstractedly. "Yeah. I'll tell the deejay."

Elgin whispered fiercely in my ear, "You need to relax, darling. Have a steak. Have a beer. Meet some people." He took the fork and shoved a plate of steak onto my hands. "The kegs are upstairs."

As I waded through people towards the kegs, many were disparaging the selfish hag who tried to crash Lannie's party. I would mutter, "Some people," wag my head in agreement, and continue maneuvering past bodies. I wanted a beer; I had never seen gathered in one place so many guys without necks, whose heads rode tightly on tops of shoulders heaped with shapeless muscle. The guys who did have necks began to seem abnormal. At the kegs, which were lined up on a table against the wall in Lannie's living room, a guy with no neck poured me a beer in a Styrofoam cup. He said to me, "You hear about the hag who tried to crash the party?"

"Selfish," I replied without inflection.

"Yeah!" he said as if we had reached an understanding. "Yeah! That's the one!" He grinned stupidly, confidently. "Want to dance?"

"Love to," I said. I guzzled the beer and indicated he should pour me another. "Know what else?" I said. "That hag lives right downstairs. Right down there!" I stamped my foot in punctuation. "Let's dance!"

Before I could knock down the second cup of beer, the Beatles were knocking out "Helter Skelter" at volume setting 10. My partner and I marched in place, stamping our feet hard with each beat. He shouted explanation to the people around us. They

took up the dance and soon the entire herd of people filling the living room and kitchen was stamping their feet and banging on furniture with fists and dishes and whatever else came handy. A glass mug broke into pieces on the kitchen floor. The TV screen shattered to spiderwebs from the overzealous hammering of a guy with no neck. We all cheered and danced on. A guy with no neck leaped to the wooden table of kegs and danced, stamping, writhing, jumping. The table cracked like lightning from center to a corner, then split apart, spilling the dancer, and the kegs bowled into the crowd. The keg on the far end of the table was still full, and it had space to gain momentum. It hit my partner in the legs. It folded his right knee back at a fairly sharp angle. I wished he hadn't been wearing shorts, because it looked awful. That injury would have ruined the party had it happened to anyone, but much more since the mangled, convulsing leg belonged to Lannie. The music stopped; the dancing stopped; all laughing and talking fell to a horrified

murmur. Lannie was deathly quiet, his face grimacing, without color. I finally called the ambulance myself.

Lannie's scholarship papers hadn't run the entire course through the Athletic Department bureaucracy, so the coach didn't have to waste a scholarship on a crippled player. Furniture repair costs and medical bills eventually dropped him out of school for a little while, but Elgin once said he might come back next fall, if things work out. I'll be out by then, which is disappointing only because I wanted to take the Falkner course over again — not because I think I have anything more to learn from Falkner, but because the professor gave me a D. Even though he ripped me off, it doesn't bother me — he'll get whatever he deserves, sooner or later. Natural selection always sees to it.

I won't say Lannie got only what he deserved. Who am I to judge? It just happens that way, that's all. I knew my ideas about justice weren't so far wrong.

David Wimberley

Third Place winner for poetry in the
Sigma Tau Delta Creative Writing Contest.

Porcelain

PURITAN

Stern, gray eyes stare down from the mantle where she stands,
tight lips pursed with her pale face angled to one side.
A cloak is swathed about her shoulders and her hands
clutch the portentous black book. When young, I would hide
behind the great mahogany china cabinet filled
with eggshell teacups on timorous saucers that would clink
as I brushed against the cobweb-covered back. My veins chilled
as I crouched, staring up at the gray eyes that did not blink,
and remembered, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
Was she ever young with dolls and columbine in the woods?
Did she run by the trees, rest her face on rough bark, make a wreath
by twining ferns about honeysuckle vine? Could
she so quietly accept, "Woman yea shall be
subject to him," and not wonder how to be free?

Sharon Forshee



AP VII

"Garden" Christopher B. Schell



CHRIS SCHELL

FRIGIDAIRE

As Danny pulled his battered pickup into the parking lot of the small apartment building, he saw their refrigerator sitting next to the dumpster. Now what, he wondered. What has she done this time? Danny picked up the stack of textbooks on the seat and got out of the truck. Walking towards the old refrigerator, he wondered if it had finally bit the dust. It wasn't much to look at, but it had always worked. The top was rusty because Susan always over watered the plants she kept on it, and there was a large dent in one side caused by Bob, his old roommate. Late one night Bob had drunkenly tackled their friend Tony and the two of them had crashed to the floor crushing the plastic garbage can and denting the refrigerator. Danny chuckled at the thought of those two rolling around on the kitchen floor amid dozens of empty beer cans. What a party that had been. But now the refrigerator sat beside the smelly dumpster, tilted slightly as if to share some secret. Stuck to the door was a life-size, full color decal of a largemouth bass; the kind you see plastered to the sides of old pickup campers and fishing boats. The single, faded eye of the bass seemed to stare through Danny.

"I said come here! Can't you hear me? Come inside and look at what I've got!"

Danny looked towards the door. "What happened to the refrigerator?"

"Nothing. Come look inside!" Susan smiled and waved for him to hurry. "Come on, it's a surprise!"

"Why is the refrigerator out here if there's nothing wrong with it?"

"Just come inside and look, silly! You'll see!"

He stepped past her into the tiny kitchen and his eyes widened in surprise. There, in place of the old one, was a brand new, double door, refrigerator-freezer.

"Well? Can't you say anything?" Susan grinned at him, her face aglow.

"Holy shit."

"Is that all you can say?" she pouted. "Isn't it nice?"

"Yes. Yes, it's nice. It's too nice. Susan, you know we can't afford this."

"We don't have to, sweetie," she said as she put her arms around him. "Mommie paid for it."

Danny stiffened and pushed her back. I should have guessed, he thought. Mommie strikes again.

"We can't accept this," he said, shaking his head.

"Oh, don't be silly! Mommie loves to give us presents."

Yes, he thought, and you love asking for them. "But there's nothing wrong with the old one!"

"Are you kidding? It's ancient! Nothing gets cold enough. It doesn't have an icemaker, and it's ugly. We had to have a new one!"

Danny placed his books on the kitchen table and sat down.

you don't have to! Besides," she frowned, "you couldn't get that stupid fish off the front, could you?"

Danny almost smiled.

He and Bob had been returning late one night from a fruitless fishing trip and had stopped in a small country store to buy more beer. Bob had spotted the decal and, determined not to return empty-handed, he decided they should buy it and stick it to a package of fish sticks. The only problem was, they were unable to find a supermarket open at that hour. The next morning, when Danny came in the kitchen to make coffee — there was Bob, grinning from ear to ear, and there was the bass decal, stuck to the refrigerator. After the wedding Bob moved out and Danny had tried to remove the decal, but it had been stuck on for so long that it could only be removed by scraping with a knife; which would have meant repainting the whole refrigerator, so he just left it on. Over Susan's protests, of course. Besides, it was kind of unique to have a largemouth bass on the front of your refrigerator, and everyone always laughed at it and asked how it got there.

"... and it drops the cubes tight into your glass without even opening the door,"

—The single, faded eye of the bass seemed to stare through Danny.

"Look. I told you this before. I only have to replace the door gasket and it will be fine. It's on order and should..."

"You can't fix that old thing; and now

Susan was saying.

"But there's nothing wrong with the old one," he repeated. "We don't need a new one."

"Oh come on! That old thing was falling apart! We did so need a new one and Mommie was glad to get it for me."

Danny pushed his cap back on his head and rubbed his eyes.

"I know, I know. I understand what your mother is trying to do. She wants to help us out and all, but sometimes, it's like... like she doesn't think we can make it on our own and she thinks..."

"No, that's not true," he pleaded. "I do appreciate some of the things she does, but some things we need worse than others and a refrigerator just isn't one of them. I mean, it is a nice one, but..."

"You damned right it's a nice one." She placed her hands on her hips and leaned towards Danny.

"This is the very top of the line in refrigerators and we would never be able

slamming of the bedroom door. He sat motionless in the tiny kitchen, staring at the new refrigerator. He rose from the chair, jerked open the shiny door, and rummaged inside, knocking over bottles and jars until he found a beer. Danny slammed the door as hard as he could and went outside. He sat down on the steps and took a long, cold drink.

Turning his head toward the parking lot, he saw his landlord standing beside the old refrigerator, his hands on his hips.

"Hey. What are you going to do with this thing? You can't leave this here. You know you have to do something about this, don't you?"

Danny stared straight through him. "Yeah, I know."

*— "You don't know what my mother thinks," she snapped.
"Don't you start."*

"You don't know what she thinks," she snapped. "Don't you start."

"I know she's just trying to help us get started, Susan, but we can make it on our own, okay? We don't need her money."

"Oh, really."

"Yes. We can do it ourselves. We'll have to do without some things for a while, but when I get out of school..."

"We couldn't do without a one-hundred dollar fishing rod, could we?"

Danny's face reddened.

"That rod and reel was a whole lot cheaper than this thing," he said pointing at the refrigerator. "Besides, I can use it to put food on the table. I already have!"

"Except we didn't have to pay for this, did we?" She stood tight-lipped with her arms folded.

"Susan, you're missing the point."

"The point is -you just don't know how to appreciate it when people do nice things for you and you never appreciate anything my mother does for us."

to afford anything this nice if it wasn't for my mother!"

"That's the point! If she keeps buying us things we can't afford to buy ourselves we'll never make it on our own. Don't you see that?" Danny shook his head. "We just need to do without some things for a while till I get out of school and then..."

"And then we can buy more fishing rods?"

Danny's jaw tightened.

"You haven't heard a word I've said, have you?"

"I've heard all I care to hear. You don't like my mother and you don't like it when she tries to help us. You don't know how to appreciate it when people do nice things for you just because they like you, that's your problem."

"My problem is that your mother has more alimony than she has brains," he yelled. "If she honestly wanted to help us she could help pay a few..."

Danny's words were cut off by the

Steven Holley

Honorable Mention for poetry in the
Sigma Tau Delta Creative Writing Contest.

EUCCHARIST:

TRUTH

Semiotics. Signs are (also) forces:

"This is my body," changes water to
blood, bread to flesh. Blessings or curses,
word as weapon or salve.

"Which of you
shall we say doth love me most?"

"As to my
bond, no more."

He wants her only to present
an act of speech. She can only sigh,
"Nothing, my Lord." He needs reinforcement:
words are acts, like "grr" or bastardized
Latin. The painting was part of a murderous act.
Like, "I tell you what," drolls the gadfly
over the fence; he affirms with social tact
as his children run naked through your garden
toward the ice cream tinkle. The finale finds them
melting on your driveway, attracting ants.

or troth

Sharon Forshee



"Hey, what's goin' on?" Claire's raspy voice echoed slightly in the small, square living room. "Not you," she said into the phone which she held between her shoulder and her face. "Tom just popped in." She looked at Tom who stood in the doorway, looking at her. She motioned him inside with a wave of her hand. Tom slipped through the door and closed it behind him. "Oh, hold on a second," she held the phone away from her ear for a moment, "can you leave the door open?" Tom turned around and opened the door again, then, walking slowly, crossed the room and plopped down in the rocking chair.

Claire continued to talk into the phone without looking at Tom much. She sat cross-legged on the floor and rested her hands on her knees. Between the fingers of her right hand she held an unlit cigarette. In the other hand she held a lighter. Tom noticed that several times during her conversation she brought the cigarette up to her lips as if she were going to light it, but each time it got close to her mouth, she would return it to her knee in order to say something into the phone. "Uh huh," she would say. Sometimes she added a, "Really?"

Watching her play with the cigarette made Tom remember his own. He extracted one from the pack he carried in his hand and lit it. Claire straightened up on the floor and arched her back. "I love you too," she spoke into the phone. "Okay, I'll see you in a little while." She hung up the phone and stretched her arms out beside her as if she had been on the phone for a long time. Tom was wondering who she had been talking to, but was afraid to ask. His suspicions were dispelled when she volun-

teered the information. "That was my dad," she said. She was leaning back with her arms stiff and her weight resting on her hands. "I'm gonna ride out to his farm in a few minutes." She continued to sit there with the unlit cigarette in her hand.

A short silence fell on the room and Tom waited for her to break it. "Well, are

Cat Nap

you leaving now?" Tom sat up in the rocker and rested his elbows on his knees.

"In a few minutes," she replied. She waited a second and added, "Do you want to go with me?"

"Sure," Tom replied.

"Well I'm gonna have a bhang hit first," Claire said with a strained voice as she pulled herself up from the floor. She walked across the tiny room and opened the door to a small wooden china cabinet. She reached behind a large stack of books and magazines and produced a glass pipe. She sat down on the floor at Tom's feet and began to load it from a bag of pot that had been hidden under the edge of the large cedar chest which sat in the middle of the floor and served as a coffee table.

She leaned over and turned on the stereo

to entertain Tom while she was busy smoking pot. Tom noticed that his cigarette was down to the filter, so he leaned over and put it in the ashtray. Claire finished her bhang hit and, trying to hold the smoke in her lungs, said, "You want one?" Tom nodded his head and took the pipe which she had already reloaded for herself. "Guess what." She suddenly smiled. "I'm going to Wyoming this summer."

Tom put the pipe down on the floor in front of her and exhaled. He had been waiting for her to tell him. "As soon as finals are over and I can get my shit packed up, I'm leaving," she said, looking out the window over her left shoulder.

"I know," Tom said. She turned and looked at him as if surprised. "Jesse told me last week," Tom explained.

"How did he know?" Claire raised her eyebrows and held her unlit cigarette close to her face.

"Well," Tom said in a confused manner, "He said you told him." Tom looked at her and waited for her to light the cigarette.

"Oh," she said, "Yeah, I guess I did. I forgot." Another quick silence followed. Tom lit another cigarette and waited for her to light hers. She just sat on the floor with her eyes closed and her head moving slightly to the music. "Well, I guess we better go," she said.

They got into her car and drove out into the country. Tom was stoned and the trip took what seemed like an eternity. He sat in the passenger's seat and stared out the window. He wanted to talk about Wyoming, but he didn't know what to say. Occasionally Claire broke the silence and said something about the trees getting green or some wildflowers growing beside the road.

Finally she pulled the car off onto the dirt road that led up to her father's house. One side of the red dirt drive had been washed almost completely away by the spring rains and the old car had some trouble getting down it. Tom winced at the sounds of the bottom of the car dragging on the rocks the rain had exposed. He looked out the window and, wondering how much longer the car could withstand the beating she was giving it, reached into his pocket and pulled a cigarette from the almost empty pack.

At length they arrived at the house and she parked the car in front. Her father, a man of about fifty, was standing on the front porch watching them. They got out, and he welcomed them. "What took you so long?" He threw the butt of his cigarette out onto the driveway.

"We had to have a bhang hit or two," Claire replied.

"Well, how about another one?" It was a standard offer they received when they visited him.

"Well, since you twisted my arm," she said. They all sat down on the porch and exchanged pleasantries while they got stoned. The old man asked Claire questions about the trip to Wyoming. She assured him over and over that she did not need his money which he offered to her, "just in case of an emergency."

At length she got up and went inside to see her stepmother and Tom was left alone on the porch with the old man.

"Well, Tom, why are you so quiet?" The old man sat staring at Tom and rocking in his rocking chair.

Tom drifted out of his daydream and said, "I'm sorry. I didn't know I was being so quiet."

"You ain't said a damn thing since you got here," said the old man. He reached down on the porch beside the rocker and got a cigarette out of a crumpled pack. He pulled one out and lit it immediately. He sat waiting for Tom to answer. Tom just looked out across the field; he didn't know what to say to the old man. "Claire?"

"What?" Tom didn't know what the old man meant.

"You and Claire have an argument?" He puffed away on his smoke.

"Well, not really. I guess it's just..."

Here the old man interrupted, "Let me tell you something about women." He assumed a serious look and sat up in the chair. "Every now and then a woman..."

Tom never heard the rest, but he sat nodding his head now and again. He was sure that a fifty-year-old man probably knew about all there was to know about women, but that wasn't much. Tom's mind wandered while the old man talked. Now and then the man would pause to take a drag from his smoke, and the silence would catch Tom's attention. This went on for a long time.

—Claire screamed and ran toward the cat again.

Tom looked at his watch. It was almost six o'clock. Claire emerged from the house and suggested that it was time to go. Tom breathed a sigh of relief, got up from his seat, and stretched his arms out.

"Don't forget what I told you," the old man said. "It could save your life someday." Tom and Claire walked to the car, got in and began the long drive home.

The daylight was almost gone when they

reached Claire's house. They went inside and turned on the stereo. Tom sunk back into his favorite rocking chair and reached for another cigarette. His pack was empty. Claire's pack was lying on the chest next to him. She smoked the same brand as he did, so he reached for it. He opened the top of the box and pulled one out. As he was about to put it in his mouth, he noticed that it had lipstick on the end of it. He shook his head and put it back in the box. how typical, he thought.

Claire came out of the back room and sat down on the couch across from Tom. She let out a big sigh and said, "So, what did you and Dad talk about?"

"Well, you know. Not much of anything important."

"It took a hell of a long time to talk about nothing," she said. "There's no telling what the old man said to you."

"No telling," Tom mumbled under his breath, remembering nothing of the subject matter of their talk on the porch.

Claire sat up on the edge of her seat as if she had heard something. "Did you hear that," she said.

"Hear what?" Tom asked. She listened closely for another minute, then, hearing it again, jumped up and ran to the kitchen door. "It's the neighbor's cat," she said, as she stepped out the door. An instant later she called back into the house, "Tom." Tom got up and walked to the door.

Claire was there yelling at the neighbor's cat which had discovered a baby bird on the ground. "Get out of here," Claire yelled.

She jumped at the cat thinking to scare him away from the injured bird, but the cat was not affected in the least. The bird, chirping loudly, hopped toward the back yard. The cat lay motionless for a moment, studying his prey, then pounced on it again. "Tom, hold the cat while I put the bird somewhere safe."

Tom looked at her for a second then, slowly, walked over to where the cat crouched in the grass. He picked it up and tried to hold it. Claire followed the terrified bird across the yard, and the cat in Tom's arms writhed trying to get loose to pursue its prey. Tom tightened his grip on the cat, but it wiggled even harder and began to dig its claws into his arm. Tom looked at the cat. It never looked at him. It kept its eyes on the bird and made a deep meowing sound.

At that moment, without really knowing why he did it, Tom slowly loosened his hold on the cat and let it go. It hit the ground running and jumped around the corner of the house.

"Why did you let him go?" She looked at Tom.

"He was scratching me," Tom said, staring at his arm.

"Is it bad?" Claire asked without looking at Tom. She was still looking toward the back of the house around which the cat appeared with the rapidly dying bird in its mouth.

"No," Tom replied to himself. "I guess I'll be alright."

"Well, do you want to go back inside, or do you have to go home?"

"I think I had better go now," Tom said, looking at the darkening sky. "I've got a few things to do."

"Alright," Claire said. "I guess I'll see ya later."

"Okay," Tom said. He turned and walked to the car.

Curt Rutland



L O V E K I L L S

You played doctor
With your steel words.
Your tongue,
A sharpened blade,
All too ready to carve out my heart,
My love.
Your calculated calls
 prying,
 probing,
 piercing,
 into my mind.

Your harsh words,
Meticulously pricking
At my heart,
Puncturing sterile needle holes
Into my soul.
Until finally-
My heart laid empty,
A vacuum,
Shattering to release
Fountains of Pain and Blood
Onto your cold, cold hands.

You drew a fine line between Love and Hate.

The mad doctor
Carving into his patient
Long after the blood had ceased to flow,
Long after the heart had ceased to beat,
Long after all that existed ceased to exist.
On the brink of death,
You still denied your patient.
You eliminated all Hope.
Ignoring all the pleas of
 Distance,
 Time,
 and Space.

Anne Yu

Then the Realization set in:
 You killed your only love...
 Your words turn tender and soothing,
 As your calloused hands
 Attempt to wipe away the blood.
 As your tears
 Attempt to wash away the pain.
 They only burn,
 Hurting me more.

I lie in my bed of ice
 With an empty heart and
 A frozen soul.
 I fade to Black...



MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

Perspectives on Science and Religion

Now that Earth Day is over and done with, I think it's time to do a little thinking about man's relationship with nature, sans hype. It seems that many people think our problems with the environment are a relatively recent development, having their beginnings in the Industrial Revolution. In fact, these problems have much deeper roots that extend beyond the topsoil of Western civilization and into the hardest fossilized strata of our beliefs. Over the centuries Man has created two distinct lenses through which he looks at the world. We call these lenses "science" and "religion." Both science and religion have their own particular canons and dogmas, laws and theories. In extraordinary cases there is even some overlap between these disciplines once thought of as mortal enemies. So perhaps it will be worthwhile, even enlightening, to examine the differences and similarities that define the relationship of these lenses through which man views his world and all within it.

Science is a particularly Western phenomenon. It is at once the pride and the shame of our culture. Science heals our sick, feeds our poor, transports our masses, lights our cities, and gives us the power to touch the stars. But it also clogs our streams with toxic waste, fills our air with industrial and automotive pollutants, and provides us with new and hideously imaginative ways to kill each other. How can something be so good and so evil at the same time? Perhaps the answer to this paradoxical question lies in the philosophies, the modes of thought, that have

informed and channelled the direction of scientific experimentation and provided ready frameworks for the interpretation of the results of this experimentation.

The single most striking characteristic of scientific philosophy is its dualism. This dualism divides the universe into subject and object, observer and observed, scientist and experiment. This tendency is not particularly damaging in itself, and some truth lies herein. The world is composed of polarities, and this fact is found in religion as well as in science. Western religions see the world in terms of a struggle between good and evil. Eastern religions, however, have their own unique way of recognizing polarities. Buddhism and Hinduism contrast duty with desire while Taoism uses the principle of yin and yang to represent strong and weak, male and female, light and dark, wet and dry, and so on. So dualism itself is not necessarily destructive. Dualism becomes destructive only when it is overwhelmed by the impulse toward analytical reason. Too much analysis anesthetizes us to our environment. When this happens we see ourselves as the subject and nature (or women, or our enemies, or whatever) as an object which we must metaphorically conquer. But these attempts to bend all to the will of the individual are both doomed to failure and intellectually juvenile. We are like the man who takes a beaker full of water from the stream, analyzes it in a laboratory, and then claims to know all about streams, rivers, and even oceans. To use a worn-out cliché, we can't see the forest for the trees.

The total ascendancy of reason in the scientific community has blinded many scientists to the most important fact about the polarities that are our reality: their essential unity. This is a fact recognized by all Eastern religions, but, sadly, Western religions have been so greatly influenced by science that most people in our culture no longer see the world as an organic whole. This is why we have such a problem with the environment.

We desecrate the Earth every day and we never realize that we are slowly killing ourselves along with our home. But the problem is not ours alone. It seems that much of the world's pollution comes from Third-World countries, many of which embrace the aforementioned Eastern religions. The abuse of technology is fast becoming the favorite hobby of humanity all over the globe. Even the vibrant, healthy mysticism of the East has not been able to withstand the onslaught of nuclear reactors, chemical plants, industrial facilities, and all the comfort, prosperity, decadence, and decay that accompanies them.

So where is the answer? It must lie in a basic and fundamental reformulation of our philosophies of science and religion. But how are we to reconcile science and religion, keeping our legitimate spiritual concerns without turning into inflexible, dogmatic, narrow-minded evangelists? Certainly the religions of the West cannot currently provide a satisfactory answer. Christianity in particular has become so tangled up in its efforts to form a logical theodicy and still keep an image

of an omnipotent, monarchical god that it has lost sight of the simple fact that good and evil depend on each other. All poles are defined by their opposite. Good could not exist without evil, for how would we be able to define anything as good without something to contrast it with? Just as positive and negative are two opposite poles of the same magnet, so good and evil are two opposite poles of the same reality. The most important thing to understand here is that, in the case of good and evil, these poles have their existence only in our minds. But that is enough. For nothing, not even "objective" science, can be divorced from the human mind. We classify everything we perceive in a framework which may or may not be "true." The catch is that we can never really know if our conclusions are true or not. Even Santayana, one of foremost proponents of a mechanistic philosophy, admitted that science is merely a shorthand description for regularities we perceive in nature rather than ironclad "laws" that govern the processes of the world. Science cannot define nature, but neither can nature define science. Rather it is our perception of nature that defines science and should define religion. Santayana knew all this but he said that "science contains all trustworthy knowledge;" we must rely on science for it is the only reasonable game in town. What he failed to acknowledge is that religion has its own brand of trustworthy knowledge: the mystical experience.

The mystical experience is totally non-sensory. It is impossible to explain in ordinary language, thus the paradoxical riddles, or koans, of Zen Buddhism and Taoism. It is a knowledge that cannot be adequately communicated; it must be experienced firsthand. The only knowledge that one can gain from a mystical experience is the knowledge of the ultimate unity, the oneness, of all things. But this knowledge is precisely what traditional Western science and religion lack. Fortunately, science is coming to a faint intellectual understanding of this subjective unity. One of the greatest steps in this direction was the formation of the quantum theory to describe electromagnetic radiation as

consisting of both particles and waves. This theory severely limited classical Newtonian physics, which is rigidly mechanistic and dualistic in its philosophy. Another great stride came in the form of Einstein's relativity theory and the familiar equation $E=mc^2$, which is simply a mathematical expression for the fact that all matter is energy — they are a unity. Recent advances in sub-atomic physics are also exciting, for here scientists are dealing with particles that are beyond direct sensory perception. The implications of this are staggering, as Fritjof Capra explains:

Probing inside the atom and investigating its structure, science transcended the limits of our sensory imagination.

From this point on, it could no longer rely with absolute certainty on logic and common sense...Like the mystics, physicists were now dealing with a nonsensory experience of reality and, like the mystics, they had to face the paradoxical aspects of this experience.

—So the answer is that we need a more humanistic science and a more mystical religion.

This trend toward a monistic world view in science is very encouraging for it recognizes the futility of attempting to separate subject from object. Perhaps this will lead to the recognition that humans cannot be separated from their environment and that to destroy the environment is to destroy the humans who live in it. We are in dire need of a strong dose of humility and the realization that we need Nature more than she needs us should fill the prescription well.

So the answer is that we need a more humanistic science and a more mystical religion. Our science must strive to develop an ethical framework since a valueless science is impossible. It must recognize the importance of emotion and it must never discount the possible existence of certain phenomenon simply because the instruments to measure it have not yet been invented. Our religion must abandon its

logical contortions and cultivate the mystical experience in its devotees. But science and religion, no matter how destructive they can become to the human psyche, are not the real destroyers of our environment. Rather it is the gross abuse of technology and the fervent proliferation of dogma that saps the vitality of our world. Our saviour is in our philosophy when participating in the activities of science or religion. For, as Francis Bacon once wrote:

A little philosophy inclineth a man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.

Perhaps when we learn once again to see the parts of the world, its dualities and its multiplicities "confederate and linked

together" both our religion and our science will realize the human reality of the universe: that everything depends on everything else. Just as man and woman separated are powerless but united hold between them the force of creation and together can become more than just the sum of their disconnected parts, so humanity and nature separated are hollow and unfulfilled but united become the awe-inspiring impulse to devotion and the center and reason of all human religions.

Matthew Michaud

NOTE: The use of the word "man" is not intended to degrade the nobility of women, which, in my opinion, far surpasses that of most men. Rather it is simply a shorthand way of referring to humanity as a whole. It is my sincere hope that I have not offended anyone by the usage of this type of language.

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1) All submissions should be typed, double-spaced, with the usual left and right margins.

2) Submissions are accepted at the Circle office in the Glom suite. If no one is present in the office place your offering in the box on the door.

3) If you want your submission returned to you, please provide a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your submission. This makes life easier for everyone involved.

4) Submissions should also have a cover sheet stating the title, the author's name, the author's phone number (for editing purposes), a pseudonym for printing (if desired), and a brief statement for the Contributors List.

